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*The California Wellness Foundation's*

# ***Violence Prevention Initiative***

***Findings from  
an Evaluation  
of the First  
Five Years***

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## **PREFACE: The first five years of the Violence Prevention Initiative**

The Violence Prevention Initiative (or VPI) was the first major grantmaking program developed by the California Wellness Foundation. At the time it was launched in late 1992, rates of youth violence were rising and sensationalistic press coverage contributed to a public sense that "get tough" measures were the solution. Our state was in the midst of an unprecedented prison-building boom, with a growing share of public funds being dedicated to incarceration, at the expense of traditional probation/early intervention programs for young offenders. Few in the policy world identified youth violence as a public health issue, let alone saw it as something that might be preventable.

It was in this context that our Board of Directors approved \$60 million over ten years for the VPI. Not only was it our first strategic initiative, but we were unaware of any other sizeable program underwritten by a private foundation with similar goals. Lacking any guidance on "best practices," we designed a complex, multifaceted grantmaking effort to address youth violence in California at several levels simultaneously: Community Action; Leadership; Public Policy; and Research. These components are described in more detail in the enclosed report.

We entered into the VPI knowing that it was a high risk venture. The dollars our Board committed to the Initiative looked formidable on paper, but we knew from the start that they were insignificant compared to the magnitude of the challenge. Our hope was that the "whole" of our grantees' efforts would exceed the sum of their individual "parts."

Fortunately, we were joined in this effort by seven other foundations, who collectively contributed an additional \$5 million to the first five years of the VPI: Alliance Healthcare Foundation; Crail-Johnson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; David & Lucile Packard Foundation; San Francisco Foundation; S.H. Cowell Foundation; and Sierra Health Foundation. To our partners, we express a profound sense of gratitude for joining us in this trail-blazing endeavor.

Knowing that there would be significant interest in the outcomes of the VPI, we invested a significant sum in an external evaluation of the Initiative. The enclosed report by Dr. Peter Greenwood and his colleagues at the RAND Corporation summarizes their evaluation of the VPI's first five years. The evaluation was conducted in collaboration with a team of investigators from Stanford University headed by Dr. June Flora. It's a challenging task to condense five years of work into a relatively few pages, but they have done a good job of describing the components of the Initiative and capturing the major themes of the evaluation.

This paper was originally prepared for the Third Biannual Urban Seminar Series on Children's Health and Safety, sponsored by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The Foundation is supporting its dissemination as part of our commitment to sharing the lessons learned from our strategic initiatives. We will be commissioning additional work to tell more of the story of the VPI, which is currently in its ninth year.

So what happened as a result of the first five years of the VPI? The good news is that violence against youth is down significantly across the state of California. That's also the case in communities across the country . . . and cause for celebration. Can we attribute this wonderful outcome to the VPI? In five of the cities where there were Community Action Programs, violence rates decreased more than they did in comparison sites. But given the relatively modest size of our grants, a whole range of other simultaneous interventions and a booming state economy, it would take real hubris to assert that the VPI should get the credit. But it's clear to us that VPI participants have played a part in the overall success story.

VPI grantees have been active in achieving significant shifts in the state policy arena in reducing access to handguns and increasing public resources for after-school violence prevention programs. They have also provided data and personal testimony to inform local decision making on issues like the funding of prevention programs or licensing of liquor outlets. A diverse group of young health professionals, funded as Academic Fellows, have taken the first steps toward careers in violence prevention. Community Fellows have also changed the lives of individual young people with whom they've worked one-on-one in at-risk neighborhoods throughout California, as we know from direct reports. Still other individuals have been recognized as recipients of the California Peace Prize, spotlighting the efforts of otherwise unsung heroes throughout the state who have dedicated their lives to reducing violence in their communities.

Were all our ambitions realized? No. It's toughest to show impact at the community level, yet that's where most of our hopes were centered. . . in seventeen multi-agency collaboratives working in neighborhoods with some of the highest rates of youth violence across the state. With the luxury of 20-20 hindsight, we should have invested more in qualitative analysis of those Community Action Programs. Then we might have learned more about the ways in which they influenced young people to act as peacemakers among their peers, rather than concentrating on the measurement of community-wide outcomes after only a relatively short time in business.

But we realized at the VPI's inception that "success" would be relative. When the Board authorized 10 years of funding to tackle this issue, we took the realistic view that this would likely be only the first installment on a long-term commitment. At that time, we privately theorized that if even a third of our grantees proved they could make a difference, that would be a measure of real success. By that standard, the VPI has exceeded our initial expectations.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the VPI's first five years is one that's virtually impossible to measure in traditional evaluation terms. Over the past several years, the diverse array of participants in the VPI – long-time community activists, young people, public health professionals, researchers, and policy wonks – have begun to refer to themselves as part of a "movement." They tell us that the connections they've established via the VPI have forged bonds across communities that will continue long after our funding is gone. Time will tell if that self-described synergy will be sustained. Because there is much more hard work to be done before we can claim to have turned the tide in the struggle to prevent violence against youth.

Thomas G. David  
Executive Vice President  
The California Wellness Foundation

## INTRODUCTION

Violence has long been a major issue for citizens of the United States, who experience homicide and robbery rates that are several times higher than those reported in most other industrialized countries. Between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s this problem became particularly acute for persons under 21, whose homicide arrests doubled and whose violent-crime victimization rate went up by more than 50 percent. At the same time, the analogous numbers for older groups were stable or increasing only slightly.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the magnitude of the youth violence problem in this country, little is known about the potential success of various strategies for reducing it. All of the recent reviews that have attempted to identify promising intervention strategies have concluded that the knowledge base is still too thin to provide compelling evidence in support of any single approach, particularly those in which the community or neighborhood is the focus of the intervention, as opposed to interventions which target specific youth.<sup>2</sup> It is now often suggested that youth violence will yield only to a multitude of approaches that can work on several aspects of the problem in unison.

The California Wellness Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) represents one such effort. With funding in excess of \$35 million for its first five years, the VPI represents an ambitious attempt to combine policy and media advocacy, community action, individual leadership, research, and evaluation in one integrated initiative. The evaluation of the first phase of the VPI was carried out by teams of researchers from RAND and from the Center for Research in Disease Prevention at Stanford University.

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the VPI's first five years (1993–1998). It begins with the historical context of the Initiative, the goals and intent of the Initiative, its structure, and the design of the evaluation. The remainder presents selected findings from the evaluation related to both the implementation process and outcomes, and discusses their implications for future initiatives of this type.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States*, 1984, p. 178; 1994, p. 227. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Teens Experience the Highest Rates of Violent Crime," <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/vage.htm>, April 27, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Elliot, Delbert S. (Ed.) (1999). *Blueprints for Violence Prevention* (Books 1-10). Colorado: Venture Publishing and C&M Press.

## BACKGROUND ON THE INITIATIVE

We here summarize the genesis of the Violence Prevention Initiative within the California social and political context and the public health model that provided the rationale for the Initiative's design. We depict the Initiative's programmatic structure and the functional paradigm supported by that structure, and we outline our evaluation, which was based on the functional paradigm.

### Evolution

In 1993, California was, like the rest of the nation, experiencing a peak in an epidemic of juvenile homicide. The largest cities were particularly hard hit. Various potential causes of this epidemic have been cited. One respected authority<sup>3</sup> hypothesizes that youths recruited to the crack trade found it necessary to carry firearms, which induced other youths to arm themselves in self-defense. Thus, disputes that would once have ended in a fistfight now ended in lethal violence. Other observers have cited causes ranging from economic stagnation and the social pressures of poverty and racism to a long record of leniency towards juvenile violence on the part of the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the multiplicity of possible causes, actions undertaken to address youth violence in the early to mid 1990s did not extend much beyond punitive, reactive measures. For instance, California passed legislation to treat adolescent criminals as adults, and there was even talk of allowing the death penalty to be imposed on thirteen-year-olds. Gun control had stalled, and little attention was given to other measures intended to address the problem prospectively, at its source.<sup>5</sup>

Against this background, The California Wellness Foundation launched its Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) "to reduce youth violence in California."<sup>6</sup> How did the Foundation decide upon this goal? The Foundation had been established by HealthNet, a network of California health care providers, as a condition of its 1991 conversion from non-profit to for-profit status. The new foundation faced an immediate requirement to make some \$12 million in grants in its first year of operation.

The staff of the Foundation (a president, a program director, a senior program officer, a program officer, and a program secretary) launched an intensive planning effort to

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<sup>3</sup> Blumstein, Alfred, "Youth Violence, Guns and the Illicit Drug Market," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 86, pp. 10-36, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Greenwood, Peter, et al. 1998. *Diverting Children from a Life of Crime: Measuring Costs and Benefits*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

<sup>6</sup> The California Wellness Foundation, "Violence Prevention Initiative," December 1996, available from the Foundation.

- identify needs and opportunities for focused grant-making support that would enable the Foundation to meet its philanthropic mission (improving the health and well-being of all Californians)
- establish for itself a unique role within the foundation community.

A series of community-level focus groups was conducted by staff across the state, soon after the Los Angeles civil disorders in 1992. The Foundation also convened a one-day meeting of health and other experts and conducted a review of the scientific literature. Violence prevention was among the top five health issues identified through these processes.

The Foundation staff also commissioned white papers addressing the top health issues identified by the above processes, including a "White Paper on Violence Prevention." That paper, and the Foundation staff's analysis of the violence prevention issue, were heavily influenced by a series of papers published by the Centers for Disease Control in April 1992, on the topic of violence prevention.

These papers, along with the work of various activists, researchers, and professionals in the public health community, suggested the following:

- Sole reliance on a criminal justice approach to violence was inadequate to reduce the occurrence of violence.
- A public health approach—one focused on prevention—could be more productive in stemming the tide of violence. Additionally, such an approach would add a much needed balance to the increasing focus on incarceration and other programs that merely reacted to violence that had already occurred.

The Foundation identified youth violence prevention as a promising and urgent focus for its first major initiative. Several factors, in addition to the above considerations, supported that decision:

- Data demonstrated the increasing toll violence was taking on America's communities, and in particular on youth.
- California communities identified violence prevention as among their top concerns.
- No organization had leadership experienced in defining, implementing, and evaluating a public health approach to the serious problem of youth violence. A survey of other major foundations showed that none had undertaken a comprehensive grant-making effort in support of violence prevention.

In choosing to focus on youth violence, the Foundation recognized that, because violence is a multifaceted problem that is intertwined with major social problems, it poses a daunting challenge to a public health approach.

In August 1992, the Foundation convened an ad hoc national advisory committee, composed of policymakers, clergy, health care professionals, researchers, and youth and community activists. The committee's purpose was to help develop a comprehensive, statewide initiative for presentation to the Foundation's board of directors. Based on input from this 40-member



advisory committee, Foundation staff prepared a final document outlining a proposed, five-year violence prevention initiative.

In October 1992, the Foundation's board of directors approved the launch of the VPI with a commitment of some \$30 million over five years. In November the Foundation issued a request for proposals for the establishment of the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention and for community action program-planning grants as a first step in implementing the Initiative. In addition, awards to the first of four cohorts of community grassroots leaders were made to initiate a Community Leader Fellowship Program, and agreements were executed at six sites for academic fellowships.

During the first year of the Initiative, Foundation staff and the Pacific Center conducted research and planning efforts to determine the feasibility and usefulness of conducting a public education campaign in conjunction with the Initiative. A decision was reached to incorporate such a campaign, and in December 1993, the Foundation awarded a four-year grant to Martin & Glantz LLC, a consulting firm specializing in communication strategies and grassroots organizing.

Several additional grantees have been added to the VPI over the course of the Initiative, bringing the total amount of funding for the first five years of the project to approximately \$35 million. Approximately \$5 million of this total was provided by other funders acting in partnership with The California Wellness Foundation. Those are

- Alliance Healthcare Foundation
- Crail-Johnson Foundation
- James Irvine Foundation
- David & Lucile Packard Foundation
- San Francisco Foundation
- S. H. Cowell Foundation
- Sierra Health Foundation

As mentioned above, the pre-VPI political environment in California had been characterized by a criminal-justice-only approach to crime. In that context, it is noteworthy that the general prevention-oriented approach toward youth violence embodied in the VPI has made its way into several key state-level reports and legislative initiatives.<sup>7</sup>

- In September 1994, the Little Hoover Commission issued a report entitled *The Juvenile Crime Challenge: Making Prevention a Priority*.<sup>8</sup> This document presents a detailed legislative and administrative strategy for improving the state's youth crime prevention efforts. Among the recommendations contained in the report:
  - That state agencies involved in anticrime activities be directed "to make early intervention and prevention programs a top priority."

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<sup>7</sup>Foundation staff and VPI grantees participated in and helped inform some of these efforts.

<sup>8</sup>Report Number 127, Sacramento, Calif.: The Little Hoover Commission.

- In 1995, the California Attorney General's office issued *Violence Prevention: A Vision of Hope*.<sup>9</sup> Prepared by the Attorney General's 26-member Policy Council on Violence Prevention, the report concluded that to achieve a violence-free society, state and local governments and community organizations must develop and implement policies and programs that
  - increase the constructive use of the media to deglamorize violence and promote nonviolent social norms
  - reduce deaths and injuries from firearms
  - reduce violence associated with alcohol
  - strengthen communities and schools by expanding local ownership and control
  - support families, recognizing them as the basic institution for developing and nurturing children
  - foster and support violence-free relationships
  - ensure the development of healthy and responsible youth
  - recognize that all people matter, fostering a respect for diversity
  - advance personal and social responsibility
  - support violence prevention research and evaluation based on the public health model.

The Council developed literally scores of detailed recommendations emanating from the above initiatives, many of which resembled the objectives of VPI grantees. For instance, with respect to the goal of reducing deaths and injuries from firearms, the Council recommended, among other things,

- that legislation be adopted prohibiting the manufacture and sale of "Saturday Night Specials"
  - that the penalty for carrying loaded, concealed firearms be increased so that it is consistent with other concealed-weapons sanctions.
- In July 1996 the Governor signed into law State Senate Bill 1760. Specifically, the bill provided \$50 million in grants to counties for the purpose of reducing juvenile crime and delinquency. The bill stressed the importance of developing a continuum of responses to the problem of juvenile crime, with a particular emphasis on prevention and early intervention and treatment.

These state-level reports and initiatives will affect the continuing evolution of California's political environment toward one that may be more receptive to the importance of violence prevention. They represent important contributions as well to the dialogue about violence taking place beyond California's borders.

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<sup>9</sup>Crime and Violence Prevention Center, California Attorney General's Office. 1995.

## Rationale and Design

The Foundation wished to play a role in increasing the health and well-being of Californians by enhancing the public's understanding that societal violence is remediable and that interpersonal violence is preventable. The hope was that this would increase the public's support for and involvement in the implementation of public policies and community actions that reduce violence.

This desire underlies one of the most innovative aspects of the VPI: It represents an important attempt to apply a public health model to youth violence prevention. This model has served as a guide to the myriad program development and implementation decisions made by the Foundation's staff and board.

What is meant by a public health model in this context? In their paper on adopting a public health approach for preventing violence, James Mercy and his colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) argue that a fundamental component of this approach is a

shift in the way our society addresses violence, from a focus limited to reacting to violence to a focus on changing the social, behavioral, and environmental factors that cause violence.<sup>10</sup>

According to this framework, the wave of violence that crested in the late '80s and early '90s should be viewed as nothing less than an "epidemic," which, if left untreated or if treated with the wrong medicine, will threaten the very fabric of our society.

As outlined by Mercy et al. (1993), a public health approach for preventing violence comprises four steps:

- *Define the Problem:* The first step involves collecting data on the nature and magnitude of the problem, including information on violence-related morbidity and mortality, the costs associated with violence, the spatial and temporal distribution of violent incidents, and so on.
- *Identify Causes and Risk Factors:* The next step requires undertaking a variety of analyses—including epidemiologic studies, rate calculations, and case-control studies—aimed at determining the underlying causes or risk factors associated with violence-related morbidity and mortality. Such studies may be used as a vehicle for identifying particular sub-populations at risk for violence incidents and even specific interventions.
- *Develop and Evaluate Interventions:* Based on the information obtained during the first two steps, a series of interventions should be developed and evaluated. Such interventions range from observational studies of promising approaches for reducing violence to randomized controlled trials.

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<sup>10</sup>Mercy, J. A., et al., 1993, "Public Health Policy for Preventing Violence," *Health Affairs* 12:7-29.

- *Implement Interventions:* The final stage in the process involves implementing interventions shown to be effective in the previous step. However, the evaluation process should continue during this step to ensure that interventions found to be effective in demonstration projects remain so once they are introduced on a wider scale.

It is important to stress that most experts view a public health approach as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, what is typically termed a criminal justice approach for combating violence.<sup>11</sup> Even the most ardent proponents of a public health approach understand that for some individuals and crimes there is no viable alternative to incarceration. In short, a balance needs to be struck—a balance that ensures the safety of our citizens in the short run while developing a longer-term solution that addresses the underlying causes of violent behavior.

## Structure

In deciding how to structure an initiative with a public health model as the basis, the Foundation looked again to the CDC, whose papers suggested a combination of potential interventions was likely to be most effective in preventing violent injuries.<sup>12</sup> In response, the Foundation

- operationalized the various approaches identified by the CDC through four interactive components: a community action program, a policy program, a leadership program, and a research program (see Figure 1)
- established an evaluation process for the Initiative
- set up a statewide advisory committee to guide the Foundation and its staff on what was seen as a “robust yet flexible” Initiative that was expected to evolve over the course of the program.

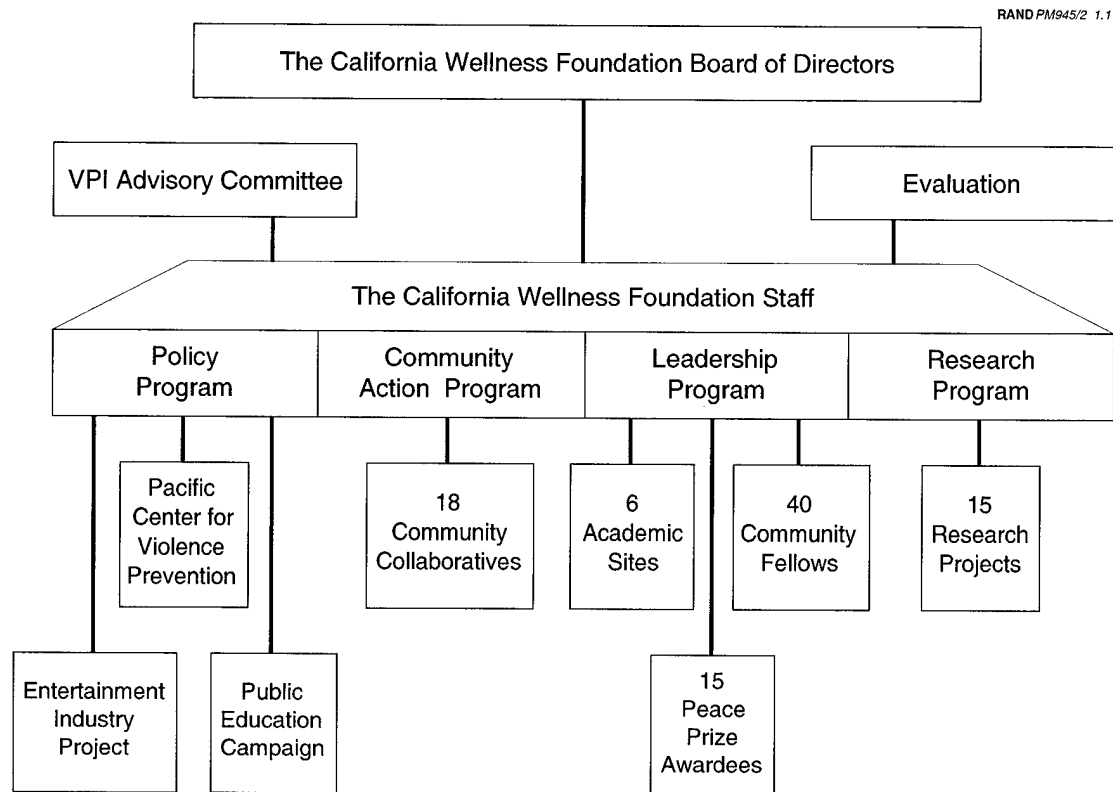
Although the VPI is structured, in a formal sense, along programmatic lines, the myriad of activities that fell under the Initiative’s umbrella can also be categorized along functional lines. Doing so helps illustrate the fact that in principle—and to an increasing extent, in reality—the various programs interact with one another to create an integrated approach for achieving the Initiative’s ultimate goal: reducing youth violence.

Specifically, as Figure 2 shows, the Initiative essentially comprises four broad functional areas of activity:

- Community mobilization and delivery of violence prevention programs to youth
- Leadership development
- Education of policymakers and opinion leaders
- Conduct of policy-relevant research on violence prevention issues.

<sup>11</sup>Moore, M. H., 1993, “Violence Prevention: Criminal Justice or Public Health?” *Health Affairs* 12:34–45.

<sup>12</sup> Position Papers from the Third National Injury Control Conference: “Setting the Agenda for Injury Control in the 1990s” (Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control, April, 1992).



**Figure 1—Structure of the Violence Prevention Initiative**

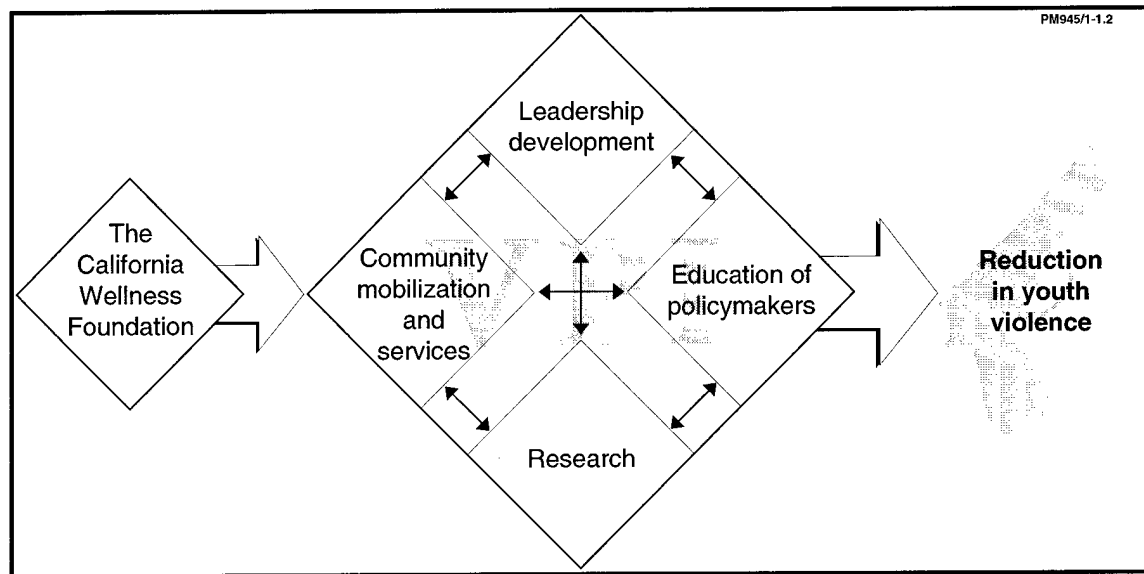
It is these functional areas on which we base our evaluation. As indicated in the figure, each is influenced by the other ones. For example, the task of educating policymakers and opinion leaders has, in part, been accomplished by community leaders who embrace the violence prevention cause. There is thus not a one-to-one correspondence to the programs. Research, for instance, is conducted not only within the Research Program but also within the Leadership Program.

## Evaluation

The Foundation planned from the very start that the Initiative would be evaluated. The evaluation was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide information on the Initiative's implementation and early effects to those with decision making authority over it so that they could improve the VPI over its first five years.
- Document the accomplishments of those supported by the Initiative.

- Assess the eventual effectiveness of the interventions as rigorously and objectively as possible, given the nature of the program and the evaluation resources available.
- Draw lessons for similar subsequent violence prevention efforts.



**Figure 2—Functional Paradigm for Violence Prevention Initiative**

Ideally, we would report the extent to which the Initiative achieved its ultimate aim of reducing youth violence in California. However, changes in youth violence can be due to a variety of causes, so it is difficult to tease out the role of the Initiative in the reductions that have occurred (and impossible to predict any long-term effects). Although we have made an attempt to isolate violence reduction effects, our evaluation also rests on the Initiative's success at achieving various intermediate effects which might be expected to exert downward pressure on youth violence levels. These intermediate effects include changes in

- young people's attitudes and skills
- adults' opinions and support for violence prevention
- opinion leaders' political activism for violence prevention
- state-level and local policies and social programs
- the media's portrayal of the problem of youth violence.

To determine these effects, we used a variety of analytic methods including case studies, in-depth interviews, and quantitative techniques. Even our quantitative measures, however, were not used to compare the Initiative's accomplishments with predetermined targets, e.g., participation rates, response rates. No such finite, measurable objectives were specified. Our judgments are thus necessarily subjective.

## FINDINGS

All of the components planned for the VPI were eventually implemented to one degree or another. Some comprised more activities than were initially anticipated, while others pursued narrower agendas than had been initially planned. Overall, the VPI in its entirety appears to be more than the sum of its parts. There was a considerable number of serendipitous relationships between the Initiative's diverse parts that appear to add to its overall impact. We structure our discussion of implementation and outcomes according to the four functional areas in Figure 2 that reach across the formal program structure.

### **Community Mobilization and Service Delivery<sup>13</sup>**

As part of the Community Action Program (CAP), the Foundation funded 18 local community-based organizations throughout California to work to prevent youth violence.<sup>14</sup> Each CAP collaborative received five years of funding averaging \$175,000 per year, except for a lower amount in the first year. The Foundation encouraged each CAP to collaborate with local public and private agencies and with youth and adult community residents. Within broad parameters that included a focus on direct services, community mobilization, and policy and media advocacy, CAPs developed action plans that were uniquely responsive to their own communities. They were required to choose defined geographic areas in which to concentrate their efforts. Although CAPs focused on many of the same issues, each CAP had a distinct approach to youth violence reduction.

In their efforts to mobilize their communities to address violence, the CAPs engaged community adults in a variety of activities. These included training sessions for community residents on local issues related to violence prevention, letter-writing campaigns to garner support, neighborhood meetings to discuss strategies addressing violence, and events to facilitate cohesion among community members. The portion of the community involved, however, was not large:

- While the fraction of adults in CAP communities who had heard of the CAPs increased significantly<sup>15</sup> over the funding period from 29 percent in 1995-96 to one-third in 1997-98, the level of participation in CAP-sponsored activities remained low at 7 percent.
- Significantly higher levels of participation (11 percent) were reported by parents of adolescents—the focus of many CAP efforts.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on the Community Action Program evaluation, refer to Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> Two CAPs were not funded for the entire five years, leaving 16 CAPs that were. Below, we refer to a total of 17 CAPs since one CAP has two projects that were run separately in different locations.

<sup>15</sup> Here and elsewhere in the following pages, we refer to a difference as "significant" if a statistical test implied there was no more than a 5 percent probability that the difference was the result of chance.

<sup>16</sup> Ranges over all CAPs for these two participation rates were 0 to 26 percent for all adults and 4 to 44 percent for parents of adolescents.



These numbers suggest that most CAPs were only modestly successful at wide-scale mobilization of community residents to address violence. It should be kept in mind that for some CAPs, community mobilization did not appear to be a primary goal.

It is unfortunate that participation levels were not higher, as those residents who did participate in CAP activities perceived significantly higher levels of cohesion among community members and reported significantly higher levels of violence prevention advocacy. While levels of community activism not related to youth violence prevention were similar regardless of level of CAP involvement, CAP adult participants reported spending significantly more time with neighborhood youth, were five times more likely to attend violence prevention meetings, and were four times more likely to contact public officials and the media about issues related to violence prevention.

Nevertheless, the CAPs appeared to have some effect on non-participants. There were significant changes in attitudes across CAP communities as a whole toward issues related to violence. Two examples:

- Over the intervention period, there was a significant decrease (from 47 percent to 37 percent) in the percentage of residents in CAP communities who thought that keeping a gun in the home makes the people who live there “more safe.”
- At the same time, support for laws to restrict and regulate handgun ownership significantly increased over time.

To increase local organizations’ capacity to address youth violence, CAPs worked with opinion leaders including county- and city-level representatives from the media, health and social services, education, criminal justice, local government, and business. CAPs appeared to be successful in working with local opinion leaders in the sense that over 90 percent of them were aware of the CAP and most (53 percent in 1997-98<sup>17</sup>) participated in CAP activities. Opinion leaders who reported higher levels of involvement with the CAPs were significantly more likely than others to report activities or perceptions suggesting increases in the community’s capacity to address violence. For instance, such leaders experienced higher levels of collaboration with other organizations as evidenced by more frequent sharing of information and materials and implementation of joint activities related to violence prevention. They also had more positive perceptions of CAP success, interacted more frequently with community residents, and reported higher levels of support for increased resources for youth and higher levels of violence prevention advocacy.

CAPs thus appear to have successfully engaged community leaders in their violence prevention efforts. Contact with CAPs appeared to prompt opinion leaders to become advocates for and participants in CAP goals and strategies. The largest apparent successes were among those opinion leaders who were least familiar with the CAPs to begin with.

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<sup>17</sup> Up significantly from 42 percent the previous year. It is noteworthy that this participation rate, in contrast to the others, was for independently selected opinion leaders—persons less familiar with the CAPs at the beginning of the intervention.

Over the intervention period, CAPs increased the number and diversity of violence prevention activities they offered to youth in their communities. Activities included

- sponsoring school-based violence prevention rallies and classes
- implementing peer mentoring, gang diversion, and conflict resolution programs
- developing summer programs such as educational trips and basketball leagues
- facilitating access to job training and community job opportunities.

Compared to participation rates in other health interventions, the percentage of community youths participating in CAP activities was not high—12 percent in 1997-98. However, that represented a significant increase from 8 percent two years earlier, and in some CAP areas, participation was much higher (59 percent in one area<sup>18</sup>). Participants in CAP activities also included a high percentage of high-risk youth who were the focus of many of the CAPs' efforts.

Participation in CAP-sponsored programs appears to have made a difference in the lives of CAP youth. In most CAP areas, youths who were most intimately involved with the CAPs were significantly more likely to report activities or attitudes suggesting lower risk of involvement in violence.

- They participated at higher rates in positive community activities (e.g., after-school programs, sports, creative arts).
- They reported greater use of violence prevention skills and higher levels of confidence that they could avoid violence.
- They more frequently discussed with family and friends issues related to violence prevention (e.g., the dangers of carrying a gun).
- They were more likely to have friends with more positive violence prevention norms (e.g., believing it was not okay to carry a gun).

These relationships held even when CAPs sponsored different types of programs (e.g., school-based curricula versus a community program). However, involvement in CAP activities was not associated with significant changes in ultimate outcomes such as use of violence and risk factors associated with involvement in violence (e.g., drinking alcohol and carrying a gun). And for a few CAPs, participation was also not associated significantly with the positive activities and attitudes listed above.

An unanticipated positive outcome of the Initiative was the building of Community Action Programs' capacity to conduct evaluations and utilize evaluation data to further violence prevention efforts. CAPs were involved in all phases of the Initiative's evaluation. As a result, CAP project directors reported increased knowledge about how to conduct evaluations (e.g., develop measurable objectives and surveys) and a better understanding about how evaluation data can be effectively used for community violence prevention. More frequent use of evaluation data was associated significantly with greater learning about evaluation and use of data in more diverse ways (e.g., sharing evaluation results with community members, media, and policy makers and using results for grants and program refinement).

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<sup>18</sup> The low end of the range was 4 percent.

## Leadership Development

Leadership development was conducted within the Initiative's Leadership Program, whose aim was

to build a critical mass of leaders willing and able to bring peace to their communities by instituting violence prevention programs and policies and mobilizing parents, youth, residents, and other member of their communities.<sup>19</sup>

In designing the program, the Foundation once again looked to the CDC, which had recommended developing postgraduate programs to attract new professionals to violence prevention and nurturing strong grassroots leaders. The results were three subcomponents—the Academic Fellowship and Community Leader Fellowship programs and the California Peace Prize Awards Program.

### *Academic Fellowship Program*

The Academic Fellowship Program's aim was to “increase the number of professionally trained health workers committed to violence prevention.”<sup>20</sup> The program provided six institutions \$50,000 per year each to establish these fellowships. Fellows were required to conduct a research or service project related to some aspect of violence prevention, enhance their skills and knowledge in several relevant core competency areas, and attend VPI meetings.

The program was successful in training a diverse group of health professionals in violence prevention. During the first five years of the VPI, six institutions within California were awarded funds to train 32 Academic Fellows.<sup>21</sup> The institutions were a school of public health, three departments of surgery, a department of child psychiatry, and the state Department of Health. Each academic fellow worked under the supervision of an experienced principal investigator.

The program clearly accomplished its goal of increasing the number of health care professionals trained in violence prevention, especially women (23) and ethnic minorities (19). Other major strengths of the program have been the following:

- The fellows have been diverse in their professional backgrounds—child psychiatry, child psychology, public health, preventive medicine, nursing, and trauma surgery. This diversity has served not only to enhance the fellowship experience but also to broaden the fellows' perspectives on youth violence prevention.
- The fellows acknowledged the networking opportunities the program and the VPI in general have afforded them including the chance to get to know and work with senior researchers in the violence prevention field.

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<sup>19</sup> The California Wellness Foundation, “Violence Prevention Initiative: A New Direction for Improving Health and Well-Being in California,” December 1996, available from the Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Of these, 25 fellows successfully completed the program during its first five years, 3 continued beyond the period covered by this evaluation, and 4 withdrew from the program prior to completion.

- Most principal investigators, as well as the Pacific Center's Academic Fellowship Coordinator, have shown a strong commitment to ensuring the success of the fellows and the program. However, we have seen some variation across sites in terms of the rigor with which requirements have been enforced.
- The program has been flexible in permitting fellows to pursue their interests in violence prevention and activism. The program has come to attract persons with an interest in the health professions (and in some instances, academia) as well as a commitment and a desire to work within the community. For example, many fellows have also been actively involved in non-research-related violence prevention activities, such as giving talks in the community, donating their time to various county and community programs or organizations, and mentoring high-risk youth.

The Academic Fellows have been recognized for outstanding contributions in their fields. In addition, they have

- raised the awareness of violence prevention among their colleagues and other minority health professionals
- enabled their institutions to develop new programs or curricula in this area
- served to increase the visibility of their institutions within the community.

Many of the program's alumni have continued to do work in violence prevention to varying degrees. Some have brought the VPI's multidisciplinary, public health-oriented perspective to the organizations where they now work. Some, citing the influence of the VPI, have elected to pursue higher degrees (MPHs, Ph.D.'s, or M.D.'s), through which they plan to continue their work on youth violence issues.

### *Community Leader Fellowship Program*

The Community Leader Fellowship Program was intended to

Empower local communities by providing financial assistance, technical support, and public recognition to individuals who have effectively organized violence prevention activities in their local communities.<sup>22</sup>

Fellows were given \$50,000 two-year grants. In exchange, they were asked to commit substantial time to violence prevention activities, to participate in retreats and training sessions, and to serve as mentors to youths with leadership potential.

The program has, by several measures, been successful in identifying and supporting productive, committed grassroots leaders. During Phase I of the VPI, the Foundation funded 40 Community Fellows.<sup>23</sup> In general, the cohorts have been diverse in their demographic and background characteristics, as well as in their approaches to youth violence. Some of the fellows interact one on one with youth and members of their community on a daily basis, while others are leaders of organizations that support youth services or manage statewide programs.

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<sup>22</sup> The California Wellness Foundation, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Two Fellows withdrew before successfully completing the program.

Most of the fellows used their award to create new programs or to enhance existing ones in order to provide direct services to at-risk youth or to mobilize communities to increase youth opportunities. Community Fellows documented violence victim stories, ran a high school youth club, published a community resource guide by and for youth, instituted a problem-solving curriculum in public schools, and established an after-school program for teenage mothers—among many other activities.

The fellows committed a substantial portion of their time to violence prevention activities; for example, many devoted more than 40 hours per week. They also demonstrated a strong commitment to mentoring youth. Many of the fellows had either been informally or formally mentoring youth prior to the fellowship and continued these activities during their tenure in the program and beyond. However, the fellows were uncertain as to the goal of mentorship—training future leaders, developing assistance to the fellow in his or her work, or intensively supporting at-risk youth. Furthermore, the degree of emphasis placed by the Foundation on mentoring has evolved over time.

Overall, the Community Fellows used the fellowship to gain

- confidence in their leadership and administrative abilities
- a clearer view of which approaches work and which do not
- a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and where to obtain the resources necessary to sustain their work.

The fellowship also has enabled these grassroots leaders to strengthen their links with their peers in the violence prevention community. Importantly, the program has served to raise the fellows' visibility within their own community and among policymakers and funders.

Fellows interviewed three to four years after their fellowship ended have continued to be enthusiastically invested in violence prevention.

- As VPI alumni, they have gained access to funding resources and policymakers, as well as enhanced support from their communities, which has enabled them to continue their work.
- Some have turned over portions of programs initiated during the fellowship to others (including mentored youths) or have trained others to assume responsibility.
- Others have gone on to seek advanced degrees in order to continue to pursue their efforts in violence prevention.

The Community Action Programs also helped in developing leadership. CAPs viewed the development of leaders as critical to youths' positive growth and development. Different opportunities were provided for youth to develop leadership skills:

- leading CAP youth collaboratives
- planning CAP activities
- recruiting other youths or adults to get involved in CAP efforts

- developing and using media and policy advocacy skills to influence residents and leaders in their community.

As a result of their involvement in these types of activities, youths reported positive changes in their lives:

- being seen as a role model by younger adolescents
- an increased ability to resolve conflicts
- making positive contributions to their community.

### **Education of Policymakers**

Policymaker education was carried out principally within the VPI's Policy Program, although the CAPs also played a part. The Policy Program had three goals:

- Shift society's definition of youth violence from a law enforcement perspective only to include a public health perspective that addresses societal and environmental influences contributing to youth violence.
- Advocate for public policies that reduce access to alcohol and other drugs that contribute to youth violence.
- Advocate for public policies that reduce firearm injury and death among youths.

In the service of these goals, three components were established within this program: The Pacific Center for Violence Prevention worked principally through print channels and personal contacts to pursue the program's three goals.<sup>24</sup> Martin & Glantz LLC conducted public-education campaigns in support of the goals. These campaigns included media coverage, videoconferences, and print materials. Mediascope, Inc., conducted an Entertainment Industry Project, intended to elevate the consciousness of that industry relative to its portrayal of violence.

**Pacific Center.** Over the course of the Initiative, the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention strove to influence policy directly through interactions between its staff and policymakers, opinion leaders, and activists. During the last few years, we have become increasingly impressed with the Pacific Center's progress in meeting the policy goals of promoting the public health perspective on youth violence and advocating policies reducing firearm injuries and death among youth.

Evidence of the Pacific Center's effectiveness in making progress toward meeting the VPI's policy goals was found in our analysis of legislative trends in California and two other big states (Michigan and Illinois). The methods used to conduct this analysis are described in Appendix B.

In general, we found that the Center's efforts relating to firearm legislation met with the greatest level of success. Bills supported by the Center grew more numerous and successful both with

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<sup>24</sup> The Center also conducted conferences and other events and activities to integrate VPI participants, provided technical assistance to the CAPs, and arranged for policy and media advocacy training for VPI participants.

the passage of time and in comparison with those in Michigan and Illinois. We also found that legislative responses to firearm violence appear to have shifted in recent years away from more punitive approaches targeting the criminal use of firearms toward those targeting firearm access and weapon design.

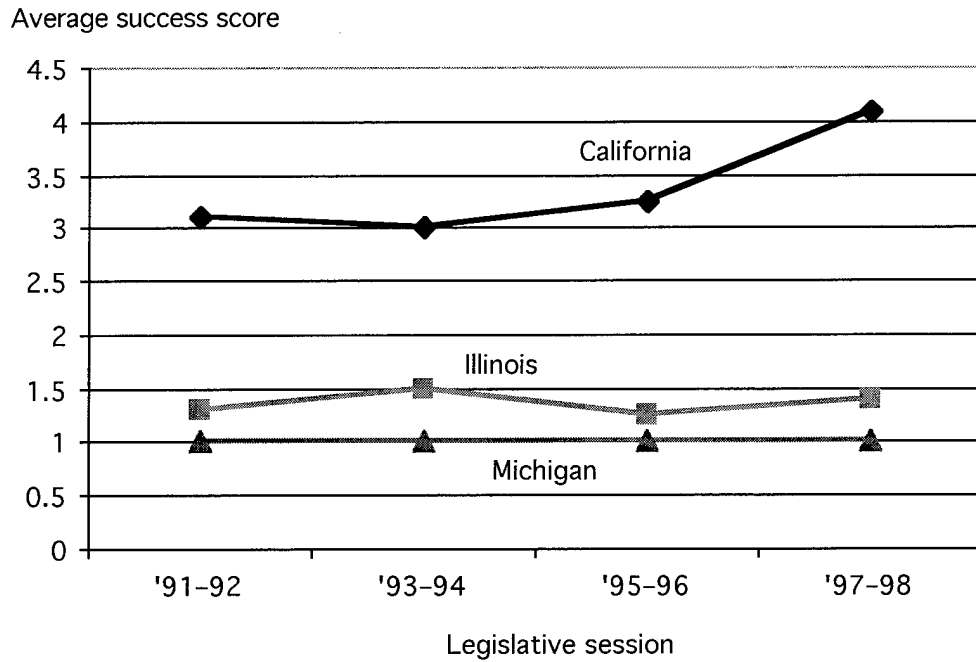
Progress on the gun control front can be seen in Figure 3, which shows the average success of access and product regulation bills in the three states. Although legislators in both Michigan and Illinois have placed greater emphasis on access and product regulation bills, these bills have been much less successful than in California. Almost all of the bills proposed to reduce access and regulate products in Michigan and Illinois failed passage in the house of origin. In California, however, we found that these bills were considerably more successful, with an average success score between three and four over the four sessions. More importantly, the success of access and product regulation bills increased during the period in which the Center and the greater VPI began to educate policymakers.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, success in the comparison states remained constant. Thus, we find some evidence suggesting that the general strategy supported by the Pacific Center became both more popular among legislators and more successful within the California legislature.

Interest in firearm bills in the California legislature changed significantly over the eight-year period studied in terms of both total proposed bills and the nature of the proposed strategies. Bills focused on access and product regulation were first proposed in the 1991-92 session but appear to have become more successful as a strategy in the latest session (see Figure 4). Alternatively, while total proposals for penalty enhancements for criminal use (which represent the largest single legislative approach to firearms) also increased, the legislature became less supportive of these bills.

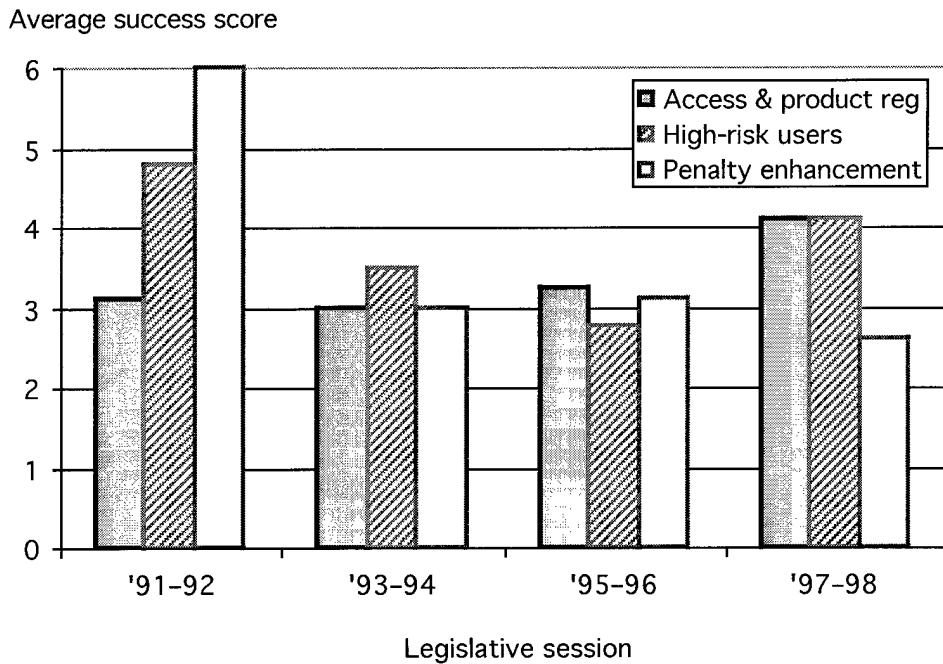
Although traditional firearms bills such as penalty enhancements and restrictions aimed at high-risk users continue to be the most frequent legislative response to firearm-related violence, access and product regulation bills significantly increased in recent years in terms of legislative emphasis. While there was a similar increase in interest in the state of Illinois in these bills, we do not see a corresponding increase in success.

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<sup>25</sup> It is possible, however, that the 1997-98 session represented a lucky year for gun legislation in California rather than a true trend.



**Figure 3—Gun Access and Product Regulation Bills Have Had More Success in California than in Illinois or Michigan**



**Figure 4—Gun Access and Product Regulation Bills Have Had Increasing Success in California, as Opposed to the Trend for Penalty Enhancement Bills**



The Pacific Center may also have contributed to legislative successes in the area of shifting the perspective on youth violence. Several promising measures supported by the Center first appeared as legislative proposals in 1997. These included measures to increase after-school activities, a gang violence prevention measure, and a large grant for local prevention efforts. These advances were part of a movement by legislators who appear to be more supportive of a broad array of prevention measures. The observed increase in legislative support for a wide variety of prevention programs presents both an opportunity and a challenge to the Center as a policy advocate. Our findings also indicate that increases in prevention bills were accompanied by increases in bills that contained more punitive measures.

With respect to youth violence prevention, proposed measures were both more numerous and more successful in California than in Illinois and Michigan. We found 65 proposed bills in California using the Lexis search compared to 17 in Illinois and 7 in Michigan. Moreover, of the proposed bills, 35 percent were enacted in California (18 bills) compared to only 12 percent in Illinois (2 bills) and none in Michigan. In California, bills varied widely among the prevention strategies considered. In contrast, bills in Illinois focused almost entirely on punitive strategies within the criminal justice system and only one Illinois bill addressed early prevention and intervention. No prevention, early intervention or diversion bills were proposed in Michigan during the entire period. We observed that in California the emphasis in proposed bills has shifted over time toward preventive approaches (i.e., local prevention and early intervention or diversion) from none in the first three legislative sessions examined to 22 percent of all bills aimed at youth violence in the last session.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, proposed youth violence prevention bills in the other two states either decreased or remained constant over time.

In summary, California local prevention and early intervention/diversion bills increased in number and success in the last session. This may indicate that the legislative strategy toward youth violence has shifted from a punitive approach toward a more preventive approach. Part of this increase in total proposals and success for prevention bills was driven by measures specifically supported by the Pacific Center, such as second-shift schools and local violence prevention grants. Proposed bills for these specific measures increased in the latest session and, on average, were more successful than alternative approaches to violence.

We cannot, of course, be completely confident that the Center's work is causally related to the improvements we have seen over the last five years in the area of gun control and violence prevention. Much of the additional evidence is anecdotal, but in a number of instances, multiple, mutually reinforcing anecdotes tend to lend credibility to the likelihood of a strong association between the Center's work and policy shifts. Some of the Pacific Center's most important accomplishments through 1998 are as follows:

- Our case study of the Center confirms that its efforts have been closely associated with, and perhaps responsible for, major state-level policy changes in the area of violence prevention. These changes include a measure that provides \$50 million annually for local violence prevention and intervention programs.

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<sup>26</sup> Again, we cannot tell whether this represents a trend or a one-time flare of activity in the 1997-98 session.

- The Center's staff worked with representatives from many, if not most, of the 67 cities and 6 counties in California that had passed, or were attempting to pass, local firearms-related ordinances (e.g., "junk gun" bans, dealer restrictions, and ammunition sales regulations).
- The Center was credited by several observers for recognizing the importance of, and creating good working relationships with, law enforcement officials. The Center also established close relationships with health care and ethnic organizations and other interest groups.
- Staff from the Center spent thousands of person-hours consulting with state and local policymakers on issues related to youth violence. Though the Center focused primarily on firearms policy, they also consulted on the other two Initiative policy goals. The contacts have typically involved
  - supplying policymakers with technical information on the nature and extent of a problem (e.g., youth access to firearms)
  - discussing political strategies
  - assessing the legal implications of policy initiatives.
- The Center made a substantial effort in the last two years to involve other VPI participants as collaborators and allies. With assistance from the Center, CAP grantees have begun to influence both local and state policies that further the goals of the VPI. For example, a 1997 bill establishing the California Gang, Crime, and Violence Prevention Partnership Program was signed into law. The bill, which was drafted and supported by one of the CAPs, directs \$3 million to community-based organizations working in the area of violence and gang prevention.
- Continued participation and leadership in monthly firearms strategy meetings have greatly enhanced the Center's efforts to coordinate statewide advocacy measures. Recent advocacy and collaboration with groups like Handgun Control, Inc., the HELP Network, and congressional staff and legislators have expanded the scope of these strategic planning meetings to a national scale.

**Public-Education Campaigns.** In addition to the policy work of the Pacific Center, the public relations firm of Martin & Glantz LLC was provided with funding to conduct two public-education campaigns aimed at policymakers, opinion leaders, community leaders, and the general public. These were the Campaign to Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids and Resources for Youth. The themes of the campaigns were the devastating effects of handgun violence against youth in California and the need for policies to increase public and private investment in comprehensive violence prevention programs for youth. Each campaign had two components:

- a mass media component comprising paid advertising, public service announcements, and an earned media campaign
- an opinion leader component comprising a database and direct-mail communications program, candidate education, and statewide videoconferences.

The initial Campaign to Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids appears to have had a substantial impact. A statewide videoconference in February 1995 announcing the handgun campaign served as a pivotal event in the movement to pass local gun control ordinances within California. Policymakers, researchers, and advocates used the videoconference as an opportunity to interact on this critical issue. This campaign, importantly, brought together individuals and organizations (e.g., law enforcement officials, educators, community activists, health care professionals) who might normally not have worked together on these issues. The timing of the videoconference and the information provided, especially the findings from the report *Ring of Fire*, appear to have been a catalyst for efforts across the state to pass local ordinances restricting youth access to firearms. The campaign's key messages such as "handguns are the leading killer of youth in California" were cited widely by those actively engaged in the gun control debate and continue to be cited four years later. A content analysis of earned media coverage by the campaign showed that it was successful in portraying youth as the victims of violent crime. In three-quarters of the news segments, there were clear messages assigning responsibility of the violence against youth to gun availability.

The second public education campaign, Resources for Youth, was launched in November 1996 and built on the first. For example, the second campaign formalized the relationships with key statewide organizations that begun to form during the handgun campaign. These organizations included the California State Parent-Teacher Association, the League of Women Voters, and the California Police Chiefs Association, among others.

The earned media coverage for the Resources for Youth campaign appears to have increased the visibility of those affiliated with the Initiative and the campaign itself. However, the overall message contained in the print media coverage did not appear to shift strongly towards a public-health versus a juvenile-justice approach, for two reasons:

- The campaign had to compete for coverage with simultaneous "get tough" juvenile justice campaigns spearheaded by state and national politicians. *Not losing ground* in the 1997 media environment might thus be counted as an accomplishment of the Resources for Youth campaign.
- The second campaign did not have the same advantage as the initial handgun campaign in having a readily identifiable message to put forth.

Despite the disadvantages, the campaign's penetration appears to have been relatively high. Nearly half the opinion leaders surveyed were able to recall key campaign elements, notably the award-winning public service announcement entitled "Jeremy" and polling data on California voters' attitudes toward investment strategies for reducing youth violence. And this second campaign's videoconference seems to have been helpful in stimulating further dissemination of its message:

- Of those who had attended, nearly three-quarters either had mentioned the Resources for Youth campaign to others or had shared campaign materials with others.
- One out of three attendees reported using the campaign materials in support of their own violence prevention activities.

Martin & Glantz's public-education campaign efforts appeared to yield several significant indirect effects as well:

- The VPI's partner organizations used the materials extensively to educate their own membership.
- A campaign strategy involving communities and youths in mapping potential resources raised the community profile of various components of the Initiative including the CAPs and Community Fellows. It also served as a catalyst for discussions with community leaders resulting in specific steps by policymakers to make resources available locally for youth.
- Between 1993 and 1998, the staff of Martin & Glantz fielded thousands of inquiries from individuals for information on youth violence prevention and gun control strategies and how they might get involved.

**Entertainment Industry Project.** The Entertainment Industry Project consisted of a campaign conducted by Mediascope, Inc., whose objective was to encourage more responsible depiction of violence in the media. Mediascope undertook numerous activities in this regard:

- They organized or participated in over 100 informational forums and workshops on violence in the media that were well attended by various segments of the entertainment industry. It seems likely that these events have promoted, at least to a modest degree, positive changes in the climate of receptivity to more constructive media depictions of violence.
- Reports on industry rating practices related to the portrayal of violence were distributed to almost 3000 industry professionals, policymakers, social advocates, researchers, and members of the press. These appear to have had some influence on the salience and public discussion of this topic.
- Mediascope also prepared dozens of issue briefs for distribution to journalists, legislators, teachers, and others. Topics included youth violence in America, youth and guns, American public opinion on media violence, and the V-chip technology.

Because of the welter of forces at play, however, we cannot say with confidence whether Mediascope has had a positive effect on current portrayals of violence in the media, or whether such an effect is likely to accrue in the future.

**Other Elements.** Community Action Programs also worked to influence opinion leaders through media and policy advocacy. CAPs advocated for policies to decrease access to handguns and increase resources for youth at the local and state level. Most CAPs' involvement in such advocacy increased over the course of the Initiative. It resulted in numerous successful policy and media efforts including

- the passage of school policies to create "beacon centers"
- city and state policies to allocate additional resources for youth
- youth-produced television and radio programs promoting the prevention of youth violence.

It is important to note the several different elements and channels through which the Initiative was laying the groundwork for policy change. It was not uncommon to find leaders who had received information from or participated in activities organized by more than one element of the Initiative. These persons did not always know that these contacts were sponsored by the same initiative and foundation, but that did not lessen the effectiveness of these contacts (and may have increased it).

## Research

Through its Research Program, the Initiative funded 15 projects addressing all three of its policy goals.<sup>27</sup> The 14 projects evaluated provided a set of findings and research products that should be of use in developing more effective violence prevention policies. A few examples:

- Data necessary to formulate and enact effective prevention policies addressing youth violence in Asian-American communities
- A plan of action for addressing gang violence-related risk factors that draws on the strengths of the community
- Information on violence prevention efforts that can be used in the development of effective programs and construction of a systematically applicable evaluation methodology.

Moreover, results of some projects appear to have been used by policymakers or activists or to have influenced the policy debate.

- Legal research at the Marin Institute resulted in a model alcoholic-beverages control act. This model has been influential in attempts to revise state legislation, in local efforts to overcome state-level policy, and in support of the positions of local communities in court cases.
- Researchers at the Prevention Research Center investigated the relations among advertising, alcohol, and violence in the Latino community and put considerable effort into disseminating their results to community groups.
- A researcher at the University of California, Davis, examining the role of firearms in youth violence, produced the report *Ring of Fire*. This report documented the concentration of inexpensive-handgun manufacture in a small number of Southern California firms; its title has become part of the lexicon of the gun control debate.

The projects funded through the Research Program have so far produced or have in process 94 publications. They have been the subject of over 140 presentations by the researchers in forums of varying types, many of national or international character.

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<sup>27</sup> One of the 15 grantees was, because of internal difficulties during the grant period, not evaluated.

Research was also carried out by the Academic Fellows. Again, just a few examples:

- Examining the use of criminal justice data in epidemiological studies of domestic violence
- Surveying high school students to assess the risk-taking behavior of adolescents with a history of violence or abusive behavior
- Conducting a pilot study to examine the relationship between migration and gang membership
- Carrying out a statewide survey of health professionals and students on training received and knowledge of violence prevention as a public health issue
- Studying resiliency factors among youth
- Examining psychological and physical abuse in adolescent dating relationships.

Academic Fellows have made presentations before state and national professional associations and their research has been published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.

### **Violence Reduction**

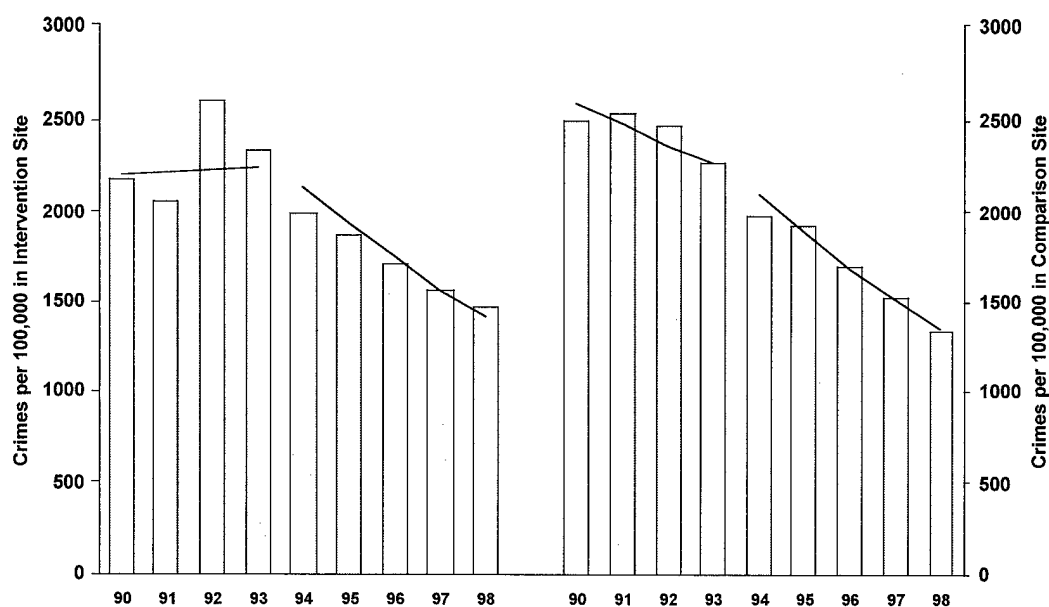
Although the level of youth violence, and homicide in particular, have been declining in most areas since the VPI was launched, available data do not permit strong conclusions regarding the Initiative's contribution to this drop. We would not expect to see an effect at the state level, as the changes sought at that level were aimed at creating a friendlier climate for violence reduction strategies that might yield results over the long term. We thus sought effects in CAP communities. Evidence came from two sources: trends in violent crimes reported to the police and surveys of community residents.

The rate of violent crime reported to the police fell in most CAP areas, but it did in most other parts of the state as well. In five CAP target areas, however, violent crime fell significantly faster than it did in other areas within the same or similar cities. These five sites were

- Stockton (where the CAP grantee was the Boys and Girls Club)
- San Francisco's Hunter's Point neighborhood (Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation)
- San Francisco Mission District (Real Alternatives Program)
- the Proyecto Pastoral in Los Angeles
- the neighborhood associated with the Los Angeles Committee on Assaults Against Women in Van Nuys.

The utility of these data are limited, however, because the CAPs, like the rest of the Initiative, focused mostly on youth violence, whereas the violent acts reported to the police are mostly committed by adults.

The left-hand side of Figure 5 plots the crime rate in the seven largest Community Action Programs (CAPs) for which adequate data were collected<sup>28</sup> from 1990 through 1998. Two growth rates have been estimated for these data, one from 1990 through 1993, the other from 1994 (the year the VPI formally began) through 1998, and two lines are drawn to display these rates, constrained so that the lines intersect exactly halfway between 1993 and 1994. As Table 1 indicates, violence was rising very slightly in the selected areas by about 0.6 % each year. Happily, beginning in 1994 violence rates began to fall rapidly at a rate of about 10.3 % per year. The change in the growth rate is highly statistically significant; that is, it is extremely unlikely that there was no real change in the growth rate between 1993 and 1994. This fact might be seen as providing strong support for the hypothesis that the VPI funding of these community action programs led to a drop in violence in those places.



**Figure 5—Violent Crime in Selected CAP Sites and Los Angeles Net of its CAP Sites**

Unfortunately, we cannot rule out alternative hypotheses, because nearly the same change in violence rates can be seen almost everywhere else, including many places where no VPI-funded community action programs were active. To illustrate this point, the right hand side of Figure 5 shows the violence rate in the part of the city of Los Angeles that had no VPI-funded community action programs—a large urban area with characteristics similar to the places selected for VPI funding.

<sup>28</sup> The two sites in Los Angeles, the two in San Francisco, and San Diego, Inglewood and Pomona.

**Table 1. Growth in Violence Rate Changed Significantly  
After 1993 in CAP Sites**

Time period	Annual rate of change	Statistical Significance
1990 through 1993	0.6 %	
1994 through 1998	-10.3 %	
Change in growth rate	-10.9 %	0.0000

From Figure 6, we note first that after 1993, violence declined in non-CAP areas of Los Angeles at a slightly faster rate than it declined in the CAP sites selected for this discussion (see also Table 2). However, the difference is not statistically significant. In other words, the experience of declining violence seen in the CAP sites was felt in other places. This observation challenges the hypothesis that the VPI intervention was the primary reason violence fell in those places it supported.

**Table 2. After 1993, Violence Fell at Just About  
the Same Rate in CAP and Non-CAP Sites**

Growth in violence after 1993	Growth Rate	Statistical Significance
Selected CAP sites	-10.3 %	
Los Angeles, minus its CAP sites	-11.1 %	
Difference	-0.7 %	0.63

It should also be noted that violence rates were rising prior to 1993 in the selected CAP sites, while they were falling elsewhere in Los Angeles. That is, the *change* in the growth rates seen between 1993 and 1994 in the CAP sites exceeded the change seen in Los Angeles. While the post-1993 experience in both places is about the same, a sharper change was seen in the intervention sites. Table 3 shows the specific difference. The difference between the violence growth rates in the selected CAP sites is about 4.8 percentage points greater than that difference in the rest of Los Angeles. However, this suggestive difference is not statistically significant, and we cannot reject the hypothesis that the difference comes about from chance alone.

The material introduced above is typical of the more detailed analyses we conducted for each site. In almost every place funded by the VPI, violence began to decline following that funding at a significantly faster rate. However, only in five cases is this decline significantly different from that in surrounding communities. We cannot distinguish VPI funded sites from the rest of California on the basis of declining violence rates.



**Table 3. Change in Growth of Violence for Selected  
CAPs and Non-CAP Sites**

Change in violence	Growth Rate	Statistical Significance
Selected CAP sites	-10.9 %	
Los Angeles	-6.6 %	
Turnaround	4.3 %	0.18

It should be noted that the rapid fall in violence seen above is not just a local and isolated event. Violent crime has fallen annually in the nation, the state, and in most cities, since about 1993. For the most part, the drop is a real one, not caused by an increase in the number of victims who fail to report crime or a decrease in the number of reports that law enforcement agencies choose to record.

According to a recent report, "Americans age 12 or older experienced fewer violent and property crimes in 1997 than in any other year since the 1973 inception of the National Crime Victimization Survey."<sup>29</sup> This survey is national in scope, and cannot tell us much about what happened in California, let alone in California cities and neighborhoods. However, its conclusions are based on a sample of households and do not depend on the willingness of victims to report incidents to law enforcement agencies or on how thoroughly those agencies record those incidents and make their statistics public. Figure 6 shows the homicide victimization rate for each year from 1981 through 1997 for California and for the City of Los Angeles.<sup>30</sup>

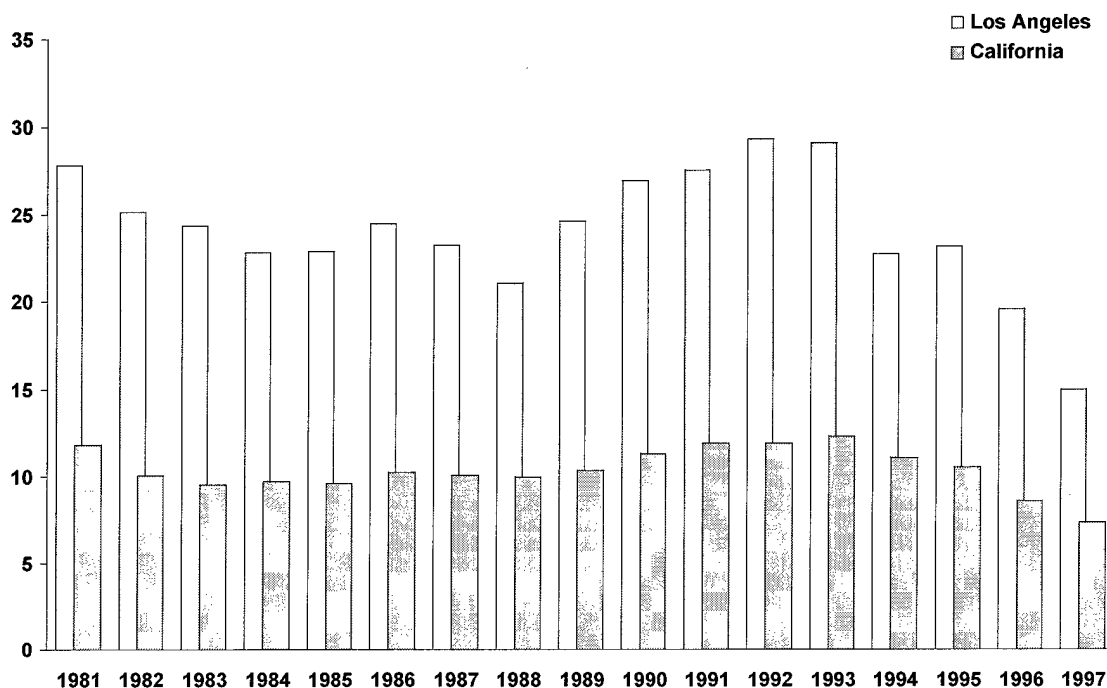
In both the state and the city, the homicide rate in 1997 fell far below anything seen in the previous sixteen years. The data upon which Figure 6 is based come from law enforcement agencies (homicide victims cannot, by definition, participate in victimization surveys), but unlike many other crimes, we believe most homicides are reported to the police or to the medical examiner, and much attention is paid to these records. The dramatic fall in homicides since about 1993 cannot be attributed to an increasing failure to report and record them.

Our failure to detect a difference between most of the sites funded by the VPI and similar areas nearby does *not* mean the VPI programs were ineffective in reducing violence. Violence did begin to decline at a faster rate almost everywhere VPI programs existed, and it is plausible to believe that these programs had something to do with that drop. But because violence dropped almost everywhere else as well, it is impossible to distinguish the drop "caused by" VPI-funded programs from other factors that may have played an important role. Among the factors (in no particular order of possible importance) that have been credited for the drop in violence are these:

<sup>29</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization*, December 1998, NCJ 173385.

<sup>30</sup> Calculated by the authors using data from the *California Homicide File* provided by the California Department of Justice.

- Community action programs like those funded by the VPI exist in many places, and if the VPI-funded programs were effective, we must believe that some of the others were too.
- The violence-reducing effectiveness<sup>31</sup> of governmental policies such as mandatory sentencing (“Three Strikes”) and community policing may have obscured the effectiveness of community action programs everywhere.
- Changes in drug marketing, which is sometimes blamed for having caused the sharp increase in violence starting in the mid-1980s, may have played an opposite role in the early 1990s.
- The economy is much better today than it was when the VPI began.



**Figure 6—Homicide Rate in California and Los Angeles, 1981–1997**

Furthermore, we could use only relatively gross measures of violence in the communities served—data collected by agencies—and had no way to observe the behavior of the precise population the funded CAPs were intended to affect. Thus, our analysis used relatively gross measures to evaluate what may have been a relatively subtle effect, in an environment where many other things were taking place. We cannot prove the effectiveness of these programs, but we also cannot rule it out.

If between 1993 and 1998 violence had remained at the high levels seen in 1993 in most places, we might have been able to detect a significant and unique decline in violence in those places

<sup>31</sup> *Crime and Delinquency in California*, 1997, pp vi-vii.

where VPI-funded programs existed. The strong and nearly universal downward trend in violence has probably obscured any unique contribution of these programs. While the failure to find a statistically defensible proof that these programs “caused” the drop in violence is a disappointment, what actually happened is reason for celebration.

Adults surveyed in CAP communities—both CAP participants and nonparticipants—perceived that community conditions had improved over the Initiative’s course and reported lower levels of exposure to youth violence over the intervention period. Youths, on the other hand, did not see a drop in violence. The utility of these data are also limited, in this case, by the lack of comparison sites. We do not know whether the trends reported by adults and youths are better than, the same as, or worse than those that adults and youths in similar non-CAP communities would have reported.

Our inability to find a more widespread violent-crime reduction effect and youths’ reports of continued exposure to youth violence without decline may be due to limitations in the data or analysis or to insufficient passage of time. However, it may be that the investment of money, effort, and time by the CAPs was simply insufficient to effect changes detectable even at the neighborhood level. Programs in other states that have been associated with violence reduction have typically been more intensive and more explicitly focused on violent behavior than the CAPs have been.

## CONCLUSIONS

The California Wellness Foundation and the VPI's co-funders spent \$35 million over five years in an attempt to reduce youth violence in California.<sup>32</sup> Did they succeed? This question cannot be answered yet. As discussed above, some important indicators of violence are headed downward, but there are problems with the meaningfulness of all available measures. And many of the Initiative's impacts may not be realized for some time yet. These limitations prevent us from concluding with confidence that the Violence Prevention Initiative has to date resulted in less youth violence in California.

While we cannot measure effects on violence directly, we can measure what the Initiative has achieved in other terms. We find that there are many links between the diverse activities funded by the Initiative and changes in legislation, in the information available, or in personal behavior and attitudes that are consistent with violence reduction. For some of these changes (Martin & Glantz's indirect effects on local gun law passage, the effects of the model alcoholic-beverage control act), knowledgeable sources verify a causal link. For others (the effect of CAPs on youths, of the Leadership Program on its participants), those affected have told us so. For still others (the effect of CAPs on community attitudes, the Pacific Center's influence on statewide policy), the links are more hypothetical but nonetheless plausible.

We have cited here only a few examples. The Initiative funded direct services to hundreds of youths, resulted in hundreds of publications (brochures, policy briefs, journal articles, etc.) addressing violence prevention, involved hundreds of individual contacts with policymakers and opinion leaders, and funded dozens of research projects. Given the quantity and nature of the activities undertaken, it would be surprising if the Initiative had not already had some violence reduction effect. It would be even more surprising if actions taken to date had no future effect. That is because many of the Initiative's programs involve investments in the future:

- in the careers of community leaders, health professionals, and researchers working for violence prevention
- in building the capacities of community organizations
- in adding to a mass of research findings growing towards criticality
- in incrementally changing the mindsets of undecided policymakers, preparing them for an eventual convincing stroke.

In gaining some perspective on these accomplishments, it is worth keeping the following in mind:

- No private organization had previously undertaken such a concerted effort on such a large scale to reduce violence. There was thus no obvious model to turn to, no fully relevant source of guidance and lessons learned.

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<sup>32</sup> The Foundation spent somewhat more on violence prevention than the \$35 million it provided for the Initiative, since grants also went to organizations whose activities complemented the VPI but which were not officially part of it.

- Smaller-scale efforts or public-sector programs have not been able to demonstrate clear effects on crime and violence reduction.
- Simply ensuring that \$35 million is spent on what is intended is a major task. While we have reservations about the strategies employed by some of the grantees, most appeared to be making good-faith efforts to maximize the violence prevention value of their VPI funds.
- While \$35 million is a lot of money for one initiative to spend, it is not a lot of money to spend in a state the size of California. It amounts to roughly 20 cents per resident per year, or something over a dollar per young person.

The individual programs and projects are not the whole story. Many of the VPI participants with whom we talked genuinely felt that they had become part of an integrated movement. The Foundation took numerous steps—conferences, retreats, regional meetings, an electronic network, etc.—to encourage interaction and ensure that the VPI grantees perceived themselves as part of a larger effort. There were also many instances of collaboration among grantees. The Community Action Programs, for instance, have worked with other components, and the CAPs worked together on gun control advocacy. This collaboration can reasonably be ascribed to the Initiative, without which these organizations may not have come into contact. The Initiative also brought together people from different backgrounds or disciplines who would otherwise have been unlikely to work together. At least as importantly, the VPI touched many others across the state who were not formally part of the Initiative. It helped bring community coalitions, professional organizations, youth groups, and local and state agencies together in a growing movement against youth violence. In short, where the VPI is concerned, the whole seems to be greater than the sum of the parts.

## LESSONS FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES OF THIS TYPE

What lessons might be drawn from the first phase of the VPI? Here, we restrict ourselves to four key lessons for initiatives elsewhere:

- Limit the responsibilities of the grantees. Few VPI grantees were able to do everything they were expected to. The CAPs, for example, were asked to do policy and media advocacy, build coalitions, provide direct services to youths, and participate in integrative VPI activities. The Pacific Center was given three ambitious policy goals to work towards. The Community Leader and Academic fellows were expected to fulfill a number of requirements. The reasons for setting all these responsibilities are easy to identify and quite understandable. The Foundation's approach to violence prevention was admirably broad, and it was correctly worried about accountability. However, the VPI experience suggests that the individual elements of future initiatives might benefit from greater focus.
- Give evaluation a high priority in designing the elements of an initiative. The Foundation made sure that an evaluation component was in the VPI from the start. The components, however, were not always designed to allow confident conclusions to be reached about the effects of their actions. Neither were the goals of the Initiative and its component programs accompanied by narrower objectives well enough defined that progress toward them could be objectively demonstrated. We believe it important
  - to design intervention strategies at least quasi-experimentally where possible
  - where strategies need to be chosen among, to choose those permitting strong evaluations
  - to set a finite, measurable, achievable set of objectives up front.

Though it may seem obvious to many observers that the VPI has had a broad, positive effect, movements make headway by convincing skeptics and the undecided. Designing initiative components from the outset to promote rigorous evaluation should help in that regard. One way a funding agency can facilitate this is to interact with the evaluator during the design stage; input should also be sought from potential grantees.

- Allow plenty of time and resources to support integration. Though we have emphasized the synergistic nature of the VPI's structure, it has taken more time, money, and effort than expected to approach true integration. At the outset, the Foundation itself was unsure of integrating its multipronged effort. Many participants didn't understand the VPI structure, and there were background- and discipline-related communication barriers to overcome. Once progress was made, it was often partially eroded by the difficulty the components had at sustaining an institutional memory. Community Leader and Academic fellows were out of the Initiative after two years. CAPs experienced turnover in staff and participating youths. And, as mentioned above, choices had to be made between spending time on community needs and spending time on Initiative integration.
- Allow plenty of resources for technical assistance and time for skill development, and judge effectiveness accordingly. In the VPI, technical assistance was underfunded at the outset. Most CAPs were unfamiliar with policy advocacy; many needed help with program content, organization, and staff retention and development. From that starting point, success for many of the CAPs should probably be gauged by new skills attained

and used, consistency administering programs, and mastery of different aspects of violence prevention, rather than effects within the community. Similar conclusions may be drawn regarding the Community Leader Fellowship Program.

In closing, the Initiative continues with many of the same elements that proved successful in its first five years. One of the challenges it may eventually have to contend with is the inevitable upturn in violence rates. Historically, periods of decline in violence have been followed by periods of increase, and it is unlikely that the current downturn will be exempt from that pattern. Will the VPI's contributions to community violence prevention assets and the state policy environment be sufficiently lasting and robust to damp the upward pressure on violence? The Foundation might well give some thought to preparing for this eventuality. At a minimum, it might put in place some "early warning" indicators and an evaluation strategy that will be able to show whether violence rates in areas of VPI focus are increasing less quickly than those elsewhere.

## APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF CAP EVALUATION

The CAP evaluation was developed to answer three questions that parallel the CAP program objectives as stated by the Foundation:<sup>33</sup>

1. Are CAPs building the capacity of local community agencies and organizations to intervene successfully on the youth violence problem?
2. Did CAPs successfully deliver youth violence interventions at the community level?
3. Do multi-faceted community programs improve intermediate violence prevention outcomes (e.g., violence prevention skills) and reduce rates of violent behavior associated with youth violence?

### Methods

To answer these questions, a variety of evaluation methods was used, including annual interviews with CAP project directors, collaborative members, local opinion leaders, and community youth and adults; focus groups with youth CAP participants; and school and community archival analyses. In this report, the majority of findings are based on the following three data sources:

**Opinion leader telephone interviews.** An average of 480 opinion leaders was surveyed half-way through the second (1995-96), third (1996-97), and fourth (1997-98) implementation years (response rate = 76%). Opinion leaders were selected based on the following criteria: they had the potential of enhancing CAP policy, media advocacy, and program efforts; they held positions in agencies key to CAP efforts; and/or they were viewed as opinion leaders by community members.

There were three types of opinion leaders: CAP-nominated opinion leaders who were members of the CAP collaborative, CAP-nominated opinion leaders who were not members of the CAP collaborative, and independently-selected opinion leaders. Independently-selected opinion leaders were added in 1996-97 and 1997-98 in order to ensure representativeness of opinion leaders within each CAP community. They were selected by the evaluators based on a compiled list of similar types of individuals in each CAP area that included county- and city-level representatives from the media, health and social services, education, criminal justice, local government, and business.

The survey instrument contained primarily closed-ended questions to assess respondents'

- perceptions of the amount of youth violence occurring in CAP communities;
- knowledge and perceptions of the CAP;
- actions regarding youth violence prevention;
- support for policy proposals related to youth violence;

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<sup>33</sup> The California Wellness Foundation's Violence Prevention Initiative Request for Proposals, 1993.



- perceptions of community participation in youth violence prevention;
- interaction with other organizations in the CAP area; and
- demographic information.

**Adult telephone interviews.** An average of 1,806 adults living in CAP communities was surveyed halfway through the second, third, and fourth implementation years. Households located in census tracts where CAPs were concentrating their efforts were randomly selected and called a maximum of five times. A total of 50,970 randomly generated telephone numbers was attempted for all CAP regions combined. Of this total sample, 59% were not part of the survey population or did not qualify for the study (e.g., fax/modem, business, did not live in study area, ill/hard of hearing, not available until the study was completed). The qualification status of 37% of attempts could not be determined. Among the 4% known to be qualified for the survey, the response rate was 93%.

The survey instrument contained closed-ended questions to assess respondents'

- knowledge and perceptions of the CAP;
- participation in youth violence prevention activities;
- support for policy proposals related to youth violence;
- perceptions of the amount of youth violence occurring in their community;
- exposure to violence;
- perceptions of neighborhood cohesion;
- media use; and
- demographic information.

**Youth school-based written survey.** An average of 4,588 ninth- and tenth-graders attending schools that serve CAP communities was surveyed during the second, third, and fourth implementation years (response rate = 64%). Students within selected classrooms were eligible for participation if they were willing to participate, returned a signed, positive parental consent form, and attended class the day of the survey.

The survey instrument contained closed-ended questions to assess respondents'

- participation in the CAP and other community programs;
- use of violence prevention skills;
- violence-related norms/attitudes;
- exposure to violence;
- perception of neighborhood problems;
- use of violence;
- use of alcohol; and
- demographic information.

## Analyses

Analysis of the VPI evaluation data employed a variety of statistical methods and tests. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Quantitative analyses for the VPI evaluation can be categorized as univariate, bivariate, or multivariate. Univariate analysis included the generation of descriptive statistics for measures of central tendency and dispersion such as means and standard deviations. Bivariate analyses included computation of Pearson's correlation coefficients, and comparisons of two groups using t-tests for continuous measures and chi-square tests for categorical measures. Multivariate analysis included, but was not limited to, using general linear models (GLM) to compare more than three groups on a continuous outcome measure, or more than one independent variable. In GLM models, main effects treated as fixed, two-way interactions were included, and Tukey's HSD tests were used for post-hoc analyses of statistically significant main effects. For example, to assess opinion leaders' level of support for increasing resources for youth violence prevention programs, the GLM included main effects for *year* and *opinion leader type* (independently selected, nominated non-collaborative member, or nominated collaborative member), and their interaction.

To assess changes over time for continuous intermediate and ultimate youth outcomes, we computed multiple linear regression models that controlled for demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, mother's level of education, grade level), witnessing of violence, violent victimization, and perceived preventability of violence. Time was dummied with 1995-96 serving as the reference year. Participation in a CAP program or event, a dichotomous predictor, was interacted with time. When modeling ultimate outcomes, a dichotomous variable indicating high vs. low exposure to violence was interacted with time. Full entry method and pairwise deletion were used for all models. Logistic regression was used to assess changes over time for dichotomous outcomes.

Because students were nested within schools, the magnitude of between-school (or -community) variation for youth outcomes was assessed by computing the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). Although variability in youth outcomes among schools (and thus CAP communities) existed (as evidenced by a non-zero ICC), the vast majority of variability in intermediate and ultimate youth outcomes was among students, regardless of school affiliation. The results of models with and without school included as a random coefficient are equivalent, so for parsimony we did not include school as a random coefficient in our models.

Finally, for all tests of statistical significance we deemed p-values less than or equal to 0.05 statistically significant.

## APPENDIX B: LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS METHODS

In an effort to gauge the Pacific Center's impact on state-level policy change, we conducted a quantitative analysis of legislation proposed in California during the past four biannual legislative sessions (i.e., from 1991 to 1998). Additionally, we conducted a similar analysis using legislative data from Illinois and Michigan. The primary criterion for selecting the comparative study sites was the existence of a public policy advocacy group engaged at the state level in eliminating youth violence. We also wanted to select states where youth violence legislation was actively under consideration or recently enacted.

Our approach to conducting the legislative analysis was comprehensive in the sense that we considered all relevant bills. Previous legislative studies typically focused on "key bills" that were especially visible, successful, or related to salient issues in a given legislative session. The latter approach has been used, for instance, by the California Senate Office of Research, which provides annual previews of key legislation, and David Steinhart of Commonweal, who analyzed key youth crime and violence prevention bills in a recent report.<sup>34</sup> While these types of analyses provide detailed descriptions of key bills, these bills are often atypical of the larger body of proposed legislation in the areas of interest. Our analysis attempted to measure the legislative success of all bills related to the Pacific Center's three policy goals.

We examined bills proposed in California and the two comparison states both before the start of the VPI and during its development to answer three basic questions:

- How successful was legislation directly supported by the Pacific Center?
- How successful was the broader category of violence prevention or "public health" approaches to legislation?
- How well did the prevention proposals fare relative to more criminal justice oriented measures?

To capture changes in legislation related to the Pacific Center's efforts to influence the policy process, we examined legislative activity in the three study states during the last four complete California legislative sessions, with the 1991-92 session serving as our baseline. Legislation relevant to the Pacific Center's three policy goals was initially screened to meet the following inclusion criteria:<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> David Steinhart, *California Juvenile Justice, Youth Crime and Violence Prevention Legislation: Six-Year Summary, 1993-1998*, Commonweal, Bolinas, California.

<sup>35</sup> We limited legislative activity to bills proposed. We excluded from our analysis any resolutions, constitutional amendments, or other types of legislation not defined as a bill.

*Policy Goal I—Shift Society's Definition of Youth Violence to Include a Public Health Perspective*

*Criterion: Legislation that explicitly attempts to address youth violence through either control of violent behavior by youths or the provision of resources intended to prevent or divert violent behavior by youths.*

This criterion includes traditional criminal justice approaches of deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation. It also includes preventive approaches delivered by both the criminal justice system and a wider net of human service agencies such as schools and community-based agencies. The target of these approaches must be juveniles, which excludes the larger set of bills aimed at non-age-specific criminal offenses.

*Policy Goal II—Reduce Youth Access to Alcohol and Other Drugs*

*Criterion: Legislation that explicitly attempts to reduce youth access to, and/or use of, alcohol and illicit drugs through either direct control of youth behavior or the provision of resources intended to prevent or divert youth access and use. Also included is legislation aimed at the sales and marketing of alcohol to minors and any regulation or taxation of alcohol intended to specifically reduce youth access.*

This criterion provides a broad definition of approaches aimed at reducing the use of alcohol and drugs by youths through prevention, treatment, and punishment. It also includes approaches targeting environmental factors that contribute to minors' use such as advertising and furnishing to minors by adults.

*Policy Goal III—Reducing Firearm Injury and Death*

*Criterion: Legislation that regulates, taxes, or provides penalties for the use, sale, transfer, design, and manufacture of firearms and ammunition with the intended effect of reducing firearm-related injury and death.*

This criterion includes almost all of the bills directly related to firearms, with the exception of the use of firearms by law enforcement officials (unless criminal in nature) and bills related to hunting.

One potential criticism of these criteria is that they include overly broad interpretations of the three Pacific Center goals, which are focused on prevention and not punishment. We nevertheless chose to adopt this approach for several reasons. First, we wanted to ensure that important bills were not missed in the initial screening. Second, and more importantly, we wanted to compare the relative success of alternative approaches to violence prevention. For example, both penalty enhancements for violent crimes and community-based violence prevention programs are intended to prevent future violence; yet they represent widely different strategies toward achieving this goal.

**Search Terms.** To locate the entire population of bills meeting our selection criteria, we conducted a Lexis search for all bills proposed in each state between 1991 and 1998 using the following search terms:

- For youth violence —“Youth or juvenile and crime or violence.”
- For firearms —“Firearm or weapon or gun or handgun or ammunition or bullet.”
- For youth access to alcohol and drugs—“Alcohol or beer or drug.”

Using the same terms, we conducted a second electronic search on California’s state bill information Web site.<sup>36</sup> We identified bills that were missed by the electronic searches by reviewing other sources such as news and legislation reports by the research units in both legislative houses. David Steinhart’s 1998 review of key violence prevention legislation was also reviewed for relevant bills. Results of these searches are reported in Table B.1 below. We found that the Lexis search captured 57 percent of the bills meeting the above criteria and that the missed bills were evenly distributed by year and type of strategy. The California Web site search captured a larger proportion of the bills meeting the above criteria and identified 83 percent of the relevant bills identified.

**Table B.1**  
**Search Results by Data Source in California**

Data Source	Year				Total
	91/92	93/94	95/96	97/98	
Total bills located	81	524	297	591	1,493
Total meeting criteria (% of total)	32 (40%)	152 (29%)	93 (31%)	170 (29%)	447 (30%)
Of bills meeting inclusion criteria					
Percent found on Lexis	27 (84%)	83 (55%)	48 (52%)	98 (58%)	256 (57%)
Percent found on CA Website	n/a	123 (86%)	88 (95%)	133 (78%)	344 (83%)
Percent found outside of electronic searches	5 (16%)	6 (4%)	2 (2%)	23 (12%)	31 (7%)

To report the progress of relevant bills in California, we present the full sample of California bills found in all three searches. Since our two comparison states, Illinois and Michigan, do not provide a data source comparable to the California Web site, we are limited to results from the Lexis searches and use these results to compare total proposed and enacted bills across the three states. Although the limited Lexis search underreports total bills proposed, we were able to compare the different strategies used in each state and the relative success of these proposed strategies over time.

**Measuring Legislative Progress.** We measured both total bills proposed and the progress of these bills in the legislature. While including only enacted bills provides an accurate assessment

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>.

of changes in the law, this method fails to capture bills that may have gathered support in one or both houses but later failed to reach consensus in both houses or were vetoed by the Governor. The decision to consider all proposed bills instead of only enacted bills allows us to measure overall support and interest by legislators for violence prevention as well as the strength of the public health approach in each session.

For each policy goal, we categorized bills according to the strategies used to address the issue. For example, we disaggregated violence prevention bills into ten categories that covered the broad areas of local prevention resources, penalty enhancements, and juvenile justice planning.

**Average Success.** Most proposed bills are not carried past the first committee, and each bill must go through numerous legislative steps and iterations before reaching the Governor's desk for final approval. Table B.2 depicts our approach to measuring the average success of a piece of legislation. The approach uses a six-point scale to calculate average bill success for each strategy category. Proposed bills were assigned a value of 1 through 6 depending on the progress of each bill in the legislative process. To calculate the average success score for a particular strategy, we simply summed the success scores for each of the proposed bills and divided this value by the number of bills proposed in the strategy category.

**Table B.2**  
**Bill Success Scale**

Success Score	Definition
1	bill proposed; not passed by any committee
2	bill passed at least one committee in originating house; not passed on floor
3	bill passed on floor of originating house; no action in other house
4	bill passed at least one committee in other house; not passed on floor
5	bill passed both houses; blocked by governor or failing consensus
6	bill enacted into law

**Coding Reliability.** Coding reliability was tested at two stages of the coding process. The first stage determined whether the bills located in the initial searches met the criteria for inclusion. Here, researchers agreed over 95 percent of the time. The second stage involved the coding of individual bills by strategy. The two coders agreed over 90 percent of the time on the strategy assigned to each bill and over 95 percent on bill success. At each step, discrepancies in coding were discussed and agreed upon in order to enhance reliability for the final analysis of data.